



# Brandeis University

Department of  
Biology

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June 10, 2014

FROM: Professor Melissa Kosinski-Collins  
SUBJECT: Welcome to the Gateway Scholars Program

Dear International Student:

On behalf of the faculty of the department of Biology, let me take this opportunity to extend you a warm welcome to Brandeis University. We are so pleased that you will be joining our community.

I have had the pleasure of getting to know several international students quite well during my time here at Brandeis. One of my students became a TA for my introductory biology laboratory course immediately following her sophomore year. She was not only renowned for her teaching ability by her peers for her four semesters working as a TA, but was simultaneously finishing a BS/MS in Biochemistry. She was a remarkable student with a talent for science and a passion to help others. Although English was not her native language, she was able to communicate very complicated concepts in biology to her students.

As many of you know, the sciences at Brandeis are considered extremely difficult and challenging fields of study. Students often begin with both chemistry and biology during their first year on campus. It is extremely important that you find and cultivate academic relationships with your classmates immediately in these courses. We find that students are most successful when they identify a study group for themselves early in the school year. You should not be afraid to seek out peers with similar study habits to yourselves. Often these students will be from various places around the US and the world coming to science from very different perspectives and academic backgrounds. The best discoveries and most exciting advances come when science is viewed from many unique angles. Try to expand your social and scientific network as far as your can during your time here on campus.

I would also encourage you to seek out research opportunities while you are here. Brandeis is a unique school in that we have a commitment to both undergraduate liberal arts education and cutting edge research. If you are proactive, you may be able to find a research position as early as your first year. One of the key elements to being successful in both finding a lab and maintaining that position is your ability to communicate scientifically. In order to be successful, a scientist must be able to give oral presentations and write literature articles that can withstand peer review. We need to be able to defend our research and accept critique when it improves the quality of our work. In addition, we need to be able to secure and defend the funding we receive by writing grants effectively and presenting our research at granting agencies like the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institute of Health. Sometimes the individuals evaluating us are not experts in our particular field. It then becomes even more important that we are able to explain our science effectively. Just recently, I went to Washington and gave a 12 minute presentation to a group of research engineers about my work in science education. Although these individuals do not work

in my area of study, they were evaluating the quality of my work to determine whether or not my grant should continue to be funded. You should take every opportunity you can to talk and write about your studies, in whatever discipline that may be, so that you can always defend the value of what you do.

I cannot stress enough how happy we are to have you on campus this summer and over the course of the next four years. Please take every opportunity to introduce yourself to your professors and your teaching assistants. We are all here to help you be successful throughout your academic career.

Sincerely,  
Melissa Kosinski-Collins, Ph.D.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melissa Kosinski-Collins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Melissa" being the most prominent part.